

# Pioneer president dies at 92

Geoffrey Drake-Brockman, president of the Institution of Engineers, Australia in 1940, died in Perth on Dec 27. He was aged 92.

Drake-Brockman, who was also chairman of the Perth (now Western Australia) Division in 1937, was the second and last surviving of four presidents to be elected from WA.

He was one of three former WA chairmen to die last month.

The *West Australian*, in a story headlined "Pioneer engineer dies", recalled that Drake-Brockman was the man who walked across the Nullarbor to survey the first railway route in 1907 and later supervised the construction of Eyre Highway.

Drake-Brockman, a descendent of two pioneering families, was born at Guildford, near Perth, in 1885. His father was the surveyor-general in Western Australia, Frederick Drake-Brockman. His mother, formerly Grace Bussell, became known as the "Grace Darling of Australia" when, in 1876 at the age of 16, she and a stockman rescued people from the grounded ship *Georgette* off the colony's south-west coast.\*

Drake-Brockman joined the Public Works Department as a cadet engineer in 1903 and his early professional career was spent mainly on railway construction.

In World War I he served with the

*\*Grace Darling (1815-1842), became famous when, with her lighthousekeeper father, she rescued nine passengers from the wrecked steamer Forfarshire in Britain's Farne Islands in stormy seas in 1838.*

engineers, first at Gallipoli and later in France where he won the Military Cross.

In 1921 he was appointed commissioner for the north-west and lived in Broome until his appointment in 1926 as engineer for the north-west in the PWD. He was responsible for several major projects, particularly in jetty construction.

Drake-Brockman rejoined the army as a lieutenant-colonel in September 1939 and was appointed CRE Western Command. In 1941 he was appointed deputy director of engineering services with the rank of colonel and in 1943, promoted to brigadier, he was appointed director of fortifications and works.

After World War II he was appointed the PWD's assistant director of works. In 1949, at the age of 64, he resigned from the Department to become chairman of the Transport Board of Western Australia — a position he held until 1952. He remained a member of the Board until 1958.

Drake-Brockman's wife, Henrietta, who died in 1968, was a well known authoress.

In 1960 Drake-Brockman also ventured into the literary field when his book *The Turning Wheel* was published. The book recounted his career as engineer, soldier and administrator. Despite blindness, he worked on tape-recording a second autobiography during the last two years.

He is survived by his daughter, Julia, who is the wife of Sir John Moore, president of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, and his son, Paris, who is an engineer with the Commonwealth Government.

Jack Edwards, 65, a former WA Division chairman, died on Dec 2.

He was a member of the IEAust Council from 1964 to 1973.

Edwards was appointed Perth City Council Engineer in 1967 after 20 years as Assistant Engineer. He retired from the Council last June. In all he had 42 years service with the Council.

He also served as a member of the interviewing panel for civil engineering staff at WAIT, a member of the advisory committee on civil engineering at WAIT and a member of the Local Government Engineers' Examination Committee.

He was a graduate of the University of WA and during World War II saw army service in New Guinea, Bougainville and Rabaul.

Frank Edmondson, who was chairman of WA Division in 1968, died in Perth on Dec 30 aged 57.

Before becoming chairman, he had served as honorary treasurer of the Division from 1954-1957 and from 1963-1966.

His father, F.C. Edmondson, was chairman of the Division in 1934.

Edmondson joined the newly formed State Electricity Commission of WA in 1946.

His entire professional career was spent with the Commission where he was mainly concerned with electrical transmission in metropolitan and country areas. Edmondson was well known for his work in the fields of insulation and insulation co-ordination.

## THE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS, AUSTRALIA

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Fifty-eighth Annual General Meeting of The Institution of Engineers, Australia will be held at the Melbourne Hilton, Wellington Parade and Clarendon Street, East Melbourne on Thursday 6 April 1978 commencing at 8.15 p.m.

#### BUSINESS

1. Confirmation of Minutes of the Fifty-seventh Annual General Meeting held in Cooma on 17 March 1977.
2. Presentation of Annual Report and Financial Statements for 1977.
3. Declaration of the Council for 1978.
4. Election of Auditors for 1978.
5. Presentation of Institution Awards.
6. Presentation of Peter Nicol Russell Memorial Medal for 1977 to Dr D.M. Myers C.M.G., D.Sc.(Eng.), F.I.E.Aust.
7. Presidential Address — Mr L.G. Rowe, B.E., F.I.E.Aust.
8. Business raised under Bye-law 83.
9. Installation of Mr N.G. Hosking, B.E., M.A.(Oxon.), F.I.E.Aust. as President of the Institution.

National Headquarters  
11 National Circuit,  
Barton, A.C.T. 2600

E.D. STORR  
Secretary  
1 December 1977



The late Geoffrey Drake-Brockman.  
(Picture courtesy West Australian Newspapers).